Accommodations Toolkit

Highlighting: States' Accessibility Policies, 2023

This summary of states' accessibility policies for **highlighting** is part of the *Accommodations Toolkit* published by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO)[1]. The toolkit also contains a summary of the research literature on highlighting (/nceo/accommodations-toolkit/highlighting-research).

Accessibility policies often have several tiers of accessibility features: universal features, designated features, and accommodations.[2] Figure 1 summarizes how states included highlighting in their accessibility policies for students with disabilities in 2023. Figure 2 summarizes how states included highlighting in their accessibility policies for English learners in 2023. Table 1 shows how highlighting was included in the policies, while Table 2 contains additional details and specifications.

Figure 1. States' Accessibility Policies for Students with Disabilities for Highlighting, 2023

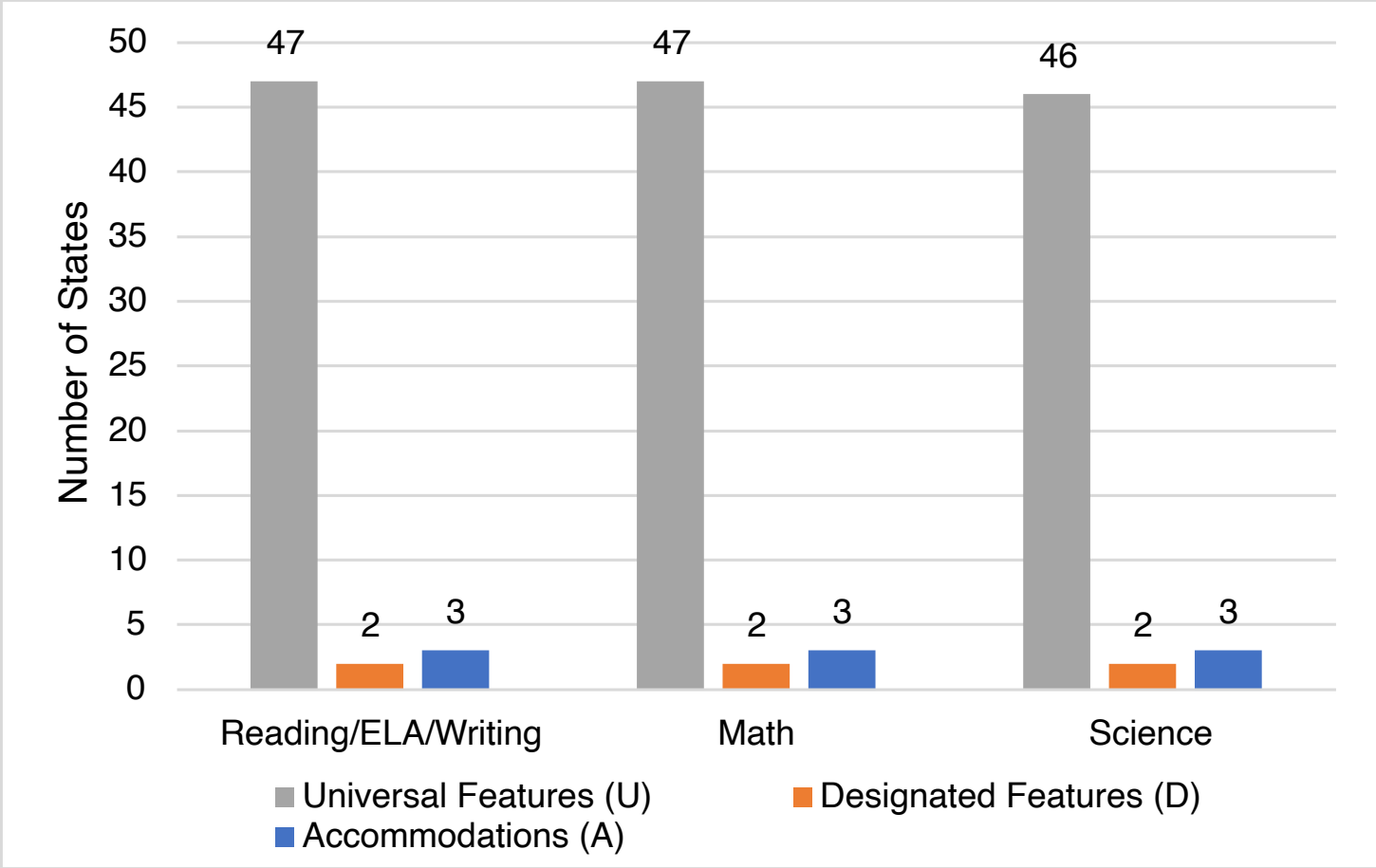

Figure 2. States' Accessibility Policies for English Learners for Highlighting, 2023

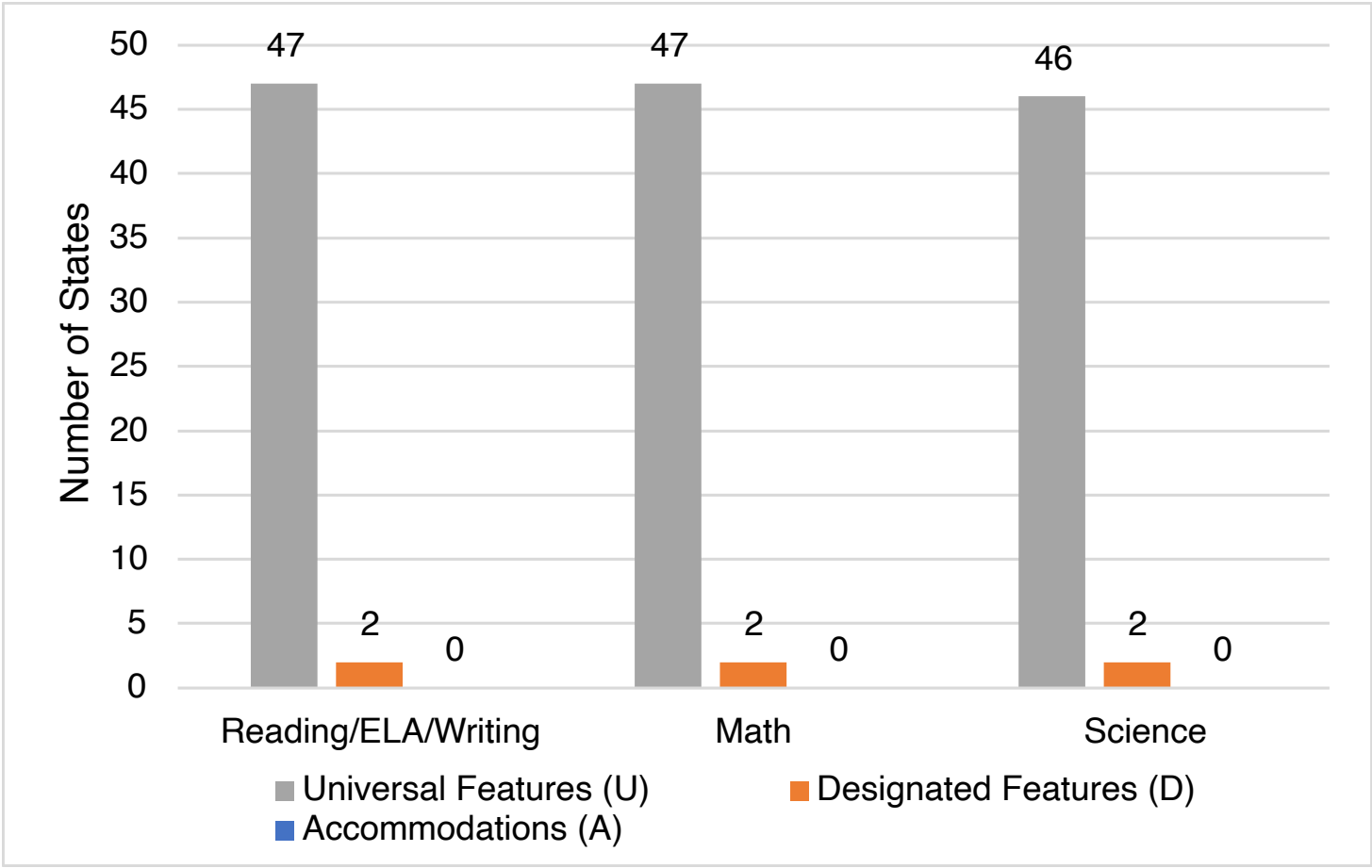

Table 1. Accommodations Policies for Highlighting by State, 2023

U = Universal Feature, D = Designated Feature, A = Accommodation, ELA = English Language Arts, X = Allowed, SD =

State	Reading/ELA/Writing			Math
	U	D	A	U
Alabama	X			X
Alaska	X			X
Arizona	X			X
Arkansas	X			X
California	X			X
Colorado	X			X
Connecticut	X			X
Delaware	X			X
District of Columbia	X			X

Florida			SD	
Georgia	X			X
Hawaii	X			X
Idaho	X			X
Illinois	X			X
Indiana	X			X
Iowa	X			X
Kansas	X			X
Kentucky	X			X
Louisiana	X			X
Maine	X			X
Maryland	X			X
Massachusetts	X			X
Michigan	X			X

Minnesota	X			X
Mississippi	X			X
Missouri	X			X
Montana	X			X
Nebraska	X			X
Nevada	X			X
New Hampshire	X			X
New Jersey	X			X
New Mexico	X			X
New York			SD	
North Carolina	X			X
North Dakota	X			X
Ohio	X	X		X
Oklahoma	X			X

Oregon	X			X
Pennsylvania	X			X
Rhode Island	X			X
South Carolina	X			X
South Dakota	X			X
Tennessee		X		
Texas	X			X
Utah	X			X
Vermont	X			X
Virginia			SD	
Washington	X			X
West Virginia	X			X
Wisconsin	X			X
Wyoming	X			X

Total (Stutdents with Disabilities)	47	2	3	47
Total (English Learners)	47	2	0	47

Table 2. Details and Specifications: States' Highlighting Accessibility Policies

State	Details/Specifications
Alabama	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter Tool: Allows freehand drawing and highlighting on the screen for most content. Examinees may draw attention to sections of text by marking them with a color. For online, the student will select the highlighter button using mouse control. For paper, the student will use the preferred tool.
Alaska	**Universal Feature:** Highlight: Student may use a highlighter to mark words or numbers. Highlighters, colored pencils, or crayons: Students can use a variety of tools to mark specific text. Considerations for online testing: highlighter tool is built into the test platform. Mouse control is needed to use this tool. Considerations for paper testing: Students can use any tool for highlighting, but responses must be marked with a number 2 pencil only.
Arizona	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: Highlight text in a passage or item.
Arkansas	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: Examinees may draw attention to sections of text by marking them with a color. Recommended Usage: Examinees with visual or reading impairments who benefit from using a controlled color method for focusing, in everyday or academic settings.
California	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: A student can use the highlighter—a digital universal tool—for marking desired text, item questions, and item answers (or parts of these) with a color.
Connecticut	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: This is a digital tool for marking desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a color. Highlighted text remains available throughout each test segment.

Delaware	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: A digital tool for marking desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a color. Highlighted text remains available throughout each test segment.
District of Columbia	**Features for All Students (Universal Feature):** Highlight Tool (Computer-Based): The student electronically highlights text as needed to recall or emphasize. The student has the option to remove highlighting over text. The highlighter color option will change depending on the color contrast option selected. Highlighter (Paper-Based): The student highlights text as needed to recall or emphasize. Multiple colors may be provided.
Florida	**Accommodation (Students with Disabilities):** A student may use a highlighter to highlight key words or phrases in directions, passages, prompts, items, and answer choices. In the Secure Browser, all students can use the highlighter tool. If a highlighter is used on a scannable document and the ink is visible on a response area (e.g., writing response, answer bubble), responses must be transcribed into a replacement document.
Georgia	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: The student uses this digital feature for marking desired text, items, or response options with a color
Hawaii	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: A digital tool for marking desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a color. Highlighted text remains available throughout each test segment.
Idaho	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: A digital tool for marking desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a color. Highlighted text remains available throughout each test segment.
Illinois	**Universal Feature:** Highlight Tool: The student electronically highlights text as needed to recall or emphasize. The student has the option to remove highlighting over text. The highlighter color option will change depending on the color contrast option selected.

Indiana	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: Used for marking desired text, item questions, and item answers in transparent colors on the screen. Highlighters for Paper Assessments: Students can mark desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a transparent color. Students should not use the highlighter to mark their responses to test items.
Iowa	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: In the online system, the highlighter feature allows the student to highlight a word or group of words. The student has the option to remove highlighting and select from two highlight color options that change depending on the color contrast option selected. Students who are taking the paper form may be provided a physical highlighter.
Louisiana	**Features for All (Universal Feature):** Highlighter Tool: This is the online tool used to highlight a portion of an item, text, or a graphic. The highlighter tool can be used virtually anywhere within the item to highlight passage text, item text, answer options, portions of graphics and images, and text within images.
Maine	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: Highlight is used to mark words or numbers. This tool allows a student to highlight text and erase highlights that have been made.
Maryland	**Universal Feature:** Highlight Tool: A highlighter, like other visual organizers, is a way for a student to maintain his or her focus on specific sections of an assignment or on an assessment. Visual organizers may also be helpful to students who have difficulty with the acquisition, retrieval, or organization of learning. The use of such tools or strategies should be student initiated, rather than teacher initiated. The student electronically highlights text as needed to recall or emphasize. The student has the option to remove highlighting over text. The highlighter color option will change depending on the color contrast option selected.

Massachusetts	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter Tool (Computer-Based): Four highlighter colors are offered: blue, pink, green, and orange. Highlighter (Paper-Based): Colored highlighters and/or colored pencils may be used. See *Principal's Administration Manual* for details.
Michigan	**Universal Tools:** Highlighter: Depending on the mode of the assessment being administered (online or paper/pencil), the highlighter may be a digital or physical tool for marking desired text, item questions, or item answers with a yellow color. When taking the paper/pencil assessment, students may use a non-embedded highlighter only in the test booklets and never on the answer documents. This tool may help students retain focus on a particular segment of text or may be used to mark specific text in order to return to it later.
Minnesota	**General Supports Available to All Students (Universal Feature):** Highlighters: Student uses classroom materials while testing; these should be provided to students who have used them in instructional or other assessment settings.
Missouri	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: The INSIGHT student platform provides all students access to an embedded highlighter for marking desired text. All students may have access to a physical highlighter.
Montana	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: A digital tool for marking desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a color. Highlighted text remains available throughout each test segment.
Nebraska	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: The student uses this feature for marking desired text, items, or response options with a color. Students who may need assistance staying visibly focused on a target area of the text they are reading to refer to that text quickly while skimming.
Nevada	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: A digital tool for marking desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a color. Highlighted text remains available throughout each test segment.

New Hampshire	**Universal Feature:** Highlight: A digital tool marking desired text, items, answers, or parts of the above with a color. Highlighted text remains highlighted through a pause. Students may use this embedded tool to help visually organize information.
New Jersey	**Accessibility Features for All Students (Universal Feature):** Highlight Tool (Computer-Based): The student electronically highlights text as needed to recall or emphasize. The student has the option to remove highlighting over text. The highlighter color option will change depending on the color contrast option selected. Highlighter (Paper-Based): The student highlights text as needed to recall or emphasize. Multiple colors may be provided.
New Mexico	**Universal Feature:** Text highlight (computer-based test): The Text Highlight tool can be used to select text and highlight the selection. Highlighter (paper-based test): Test Administrator provides the student with highlighter(s). The student highlights text as needed to recall or emphasize.
New York	**Accommodation (Students with Disabilities):** Student highlights key words in questions.
North Carolina	**Universal Feature:** Highlighters or Colored Pencils: Highlighters or colored pencils may be provided for marking desired text, questions, or response options with a color. Highlighter Tool: The student uses this online feature to mark desired text, questions, or response options with a color.
North Dakota	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: The student uses this digital feature for marking desired text, items, or response options with a color.

Ohio	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: The student highlights text. By default, the highlighter tool is turned on. The test administrator can adjust this setting in the Test Information Distribution Engine (TIDE) and the Test Administrator Interface. **Designated Feature (Paper-Based):** Highlighting Tool: The student uses highlighters or colored pencils to highlight text as needed to recall or emphasize. The department does not recommend highlighters for grades 3 or 4. These grades use consumable test booklets and highlighter ink can bleed through paper causing errors in scoring. Students must use colored pencils with caution. Scoring machines cannot scan or score student responses in colored pencil. Test administrators should monitor students who use colored pencils to ensure they only use approved #2 pencils for marking responses in answer documents.
Oregon	**Universal Tool:** Highlighter: A digital tool for marking desired text, item questions, or item answers with a color.
Pennsylvania	**Universal Feature:** In the online assessment, a highlighter is available for use by any student and is considered a test feature. If a student has a demonstrated need for a highlighter to access the test materials, it must be included in the educational plan. However, any student may use the online highlighter at will. The following online tools are available to all online test-takers as part of the test format as allowable for each section: • Pointer, cross-off pencil, highlighter, sticky note, magnifier, line guide, calculator, graphing tool, ruler, formula sheets & conversion tables
Rhode Island	**Universal Feature (Computer-Based):** Highlighter: The embedded highlighter tool is used for marking desired text with a color. Highlighted text remains available through the test segment. Defaulted to *ON* for all students. **Universal Feature (Paper-Based):** Highlighter: Student uses their preferred writing tool(s) to mark specific text in the test booklet. Highlighters, highlighter tape, page flags, and reading guides are all acceptable.

South Carolina	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: A tool that the student can use to mark specific text in the test booklet. • Online test: student can select highlighter tool from menu • Paper/pencil: student may use their preferred writing tool to mark specific test in test booklet only, not on the answer document.
South Dakota	**Embedded Tools Available to All Students (Universal Feature):** Highlighter: A digital tool for marking desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a color. Highlighted text remains available throughout each test segment.
Tennessee	**Accessibility Feature (Universal Feature):** Highlighter: Students may use a highlighter to highlight text in a passage or item in their test book as needed to recall or emphasize. Highlighters must not interfere in tracking marks or answer selecting area.
Texas	**Universal Feature:** Highlighters and Colored Pencils: Highlighters, colored pencils, or any other tool that can help focus attention on text may be used. Allowed examples: • A student uses the highlighter tool during an online test administration. • A student uses a highlighter or colored pencil during a paper test administration.
Vermont	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: Allows a student to choose a specific color to highlight a word or group of words.
Virginia	**Accommodation (Students with Disabilities):** Additional Writing Implements: Students may be provided additional (3 or more) writing implements such as, but not limited to: highlighters, markers, colored pens, colored pencils, etc. The student may use the additional markers, highlighters, colored pencils, or pens in the test booklet or on his/her scratch paper; however, these items must not be used anywhere on the student's answer document. The additional markers, highlighters, colored pens, or pencils must be provided to the student at the beginning of the session and must be used independently without assistance from the examiner.

Washington	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: Allows the student to mark desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a color. Highlighted text remains available throughout each test segment. During the ELA performance task, highlighting in the stimulus text persists when the student moves from PT 1 into PT 2.
West Virginia	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: A digital tool for marking desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a color. Highlighted text remains available throughout each test segment.
Wisconsin	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: The highlighter tool can be used to highlight some test content. Students can also remove highlights one-by-one or by using the clear-all option.
Wyoming	**Universal Feature:** Highlighter: A digital tool for marking desired text, item questions, item answers, or parts of these with a color.

Footnotes

[1]

States' accessibility policies on highlighting were obtained through the examination and analysis of publicly available information, including accommodations manuals or other policy documents, on state department of education websites. The policies were gathered from states' websites between August and October 2023.The information in the tables from each state was coded based on information in the state policy.

[2]

Universal Features are available to all students as they access instructional or assessment content. *Designated Features* are available to any student as long as an educator (or team of educators, with student and parent input) indicates that they would be helpful given the student's characteristics and needs. *Accommodations* are changes in procedures or materials ensure equitable access to instructional and assessment content and generate valid assessment results for students who need them. Accommodations are generally available to students for whom there is documentation on an individualized education program (IEP) or 504 accommodations plan; some states also have offered accommodations to English learners.

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